

Ethiopia Continues to *Deny* Genocide in the Oromia Region. But Pictures and Personal Testimonies Tell a Different Story

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1. Introduction

Reports estimate that as many as fifty thousand people have been displaced by ethno nationalist mobs, and hundreds killed. This is not the first time similar atrocities committed against, in particular non-Oromos¹, orthodox Christians^{2 3} and a number of minority groups. Why the terrorist group namely Queerro⁴ has not been accused of genocide, and what actually qualifies under the title? What exactly constitutes genocide, and why is it that hard for the Ethiopian government to admit that the atrocity crimes are in fact genocide? Well, genocide is officially defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”⁵ The United Nations adopted the Convention in 1948, following the Armenian Genocide during World War One and the Holocaust during World War Two. Here I am not going to detail conceptual differences, as outlined in the Convention, between Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes, and genocide. We cannot afford to play with words. After all, both of them involve systematically killing huge numbers of people. Of course, a distinction is made in the focus and purpose of the massacres⁶. When a large number of people are killed in pursuit of a political goal, or something similar, it is considered a crime against humanity. The label also applies in cases of mass slavery, deportation, torture, rape, apartheid, and other crimes. But if the purpose of the killings is specifically to eliminate a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, then it can be called a genocide⁷.

Recent violence in Ethiopia’s Oromia region shows hallmark signs of ethnic cleansing, says MRG. Minority Rights Group International (MRG) unequivocally condemns the recent violence, harassment, and intimidation against minorities in Ethiopia’s Oromia region, which show disturbing hallmark signs of ethnic cleansing.⁸ The systematic and large-scale violence that marks atrocity crimes requires a substantial level of planning that, in most cases, is

¹ Jawar instigated a massacre in October 2019: The violence started on October 23rd after hundreds of young men gathered outside the residence of Jawar Mohammed, a controversial activist who returned to Ethiopia last year at Abiy’s invitation. Both men are Oromos, Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group, and are popular in the region. But Jawar’s supporters, a youth group known as the “Queerro”, took to the streets of Addis Ababa and other towns after their leader said he faced a state-orchestrated attempt on his life. In a post shared with his 1.75m Facebook followers he said police had tried to remove his government security detail in the dead of night. They had resisted. Tens of people died. Most were stoned to death. Near Addis Ababa non-Oromo were killed in unprovoked attacks. Spreading violence may now have claimed as many as 80 lives, says Ethiopia’s human rights commissioner. Some died in attacks on churches and mosques, in a worrying sign that ethnic conflicts risk turning into religious ones, too. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/11/02/ethnic-violence-threatens-to-tear-ethiopia-apart>.

² According to the field report “These were the most horrific days for Christians in the Oromo region. There are different factions in the region. Some are ethno-nationalist and others are religious. The majority of those who got killed in a brutal way (beheaded and mutilated) are Orthodox Christian of Amhara Ethnicity. The other targets were Gurage, Wolayita, Tigreans, and Gammu ethnicities. No governmental forces were present in the scene. The murders were armed with knives and guns. Nobody stopped nor interfered. After the massacre, government soldiers are deployed.” (Source Source: OCP http://www.spc.rs/eng/genocide_orthodox_christians_and_minorities_ethiopia. Christian world News.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/zmikiyasdebir/videos/650038755593713/?app=fbl>

⁴ The *Queerro* (also Qeeyroo or Qero) is a movement of young Oromos in Ethiopia for political change.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

⁶ “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” (PDF). *United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law*. Retrieved 5 August 2020.

⁷ Staub, Ervin. *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

⁸ <https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/22/ethnic-cleansing-romia/?fbclid=IwAR260firPWyPmmysTIuMslO79EXggXmzXftyjCEYLWql-yxrQOgyzqy8gBc>

sustained over a period of time. To be able to engage in such conduct, actors aiming at committing atrocity crimes must have at their substantial resources and support, either internal or external⁹. A man sheltering in the church, said: “The killers moved from home to home. They knew their targets and they were quick and methodical with the way they poured gasoline over properties. Nobody in town recognised any of them. They aren’t from the area, but someone from here must have guided them.” The victims are classified; The symbolization attributed to the victims is *nefitegna* as a symbol to identify and kill¹⁰; the victims are discriminated; they are dehumanized. And the perpetrators are organized and trained to loot¹¹ and kill¹². Leaders of the ethno fascist mob ordered a campaign of killing and cultural destruction. Ethnic Amharas, Gurage, etc and Christian Oromos were shot, hung, and beheaded en masse; they were burned alive in their homes.

The attack on Ms. Shiferaw’s home on June 30 left her and her four children sheltering in a local church and worried about their safety. “I was born and raised in Shashamene, it’s the only place I know. But to the rioters, I was suddenly an outsider who did not belong here,” she says.Munir Ahmed, manager of one of the city’s most popular restaurants, saw his restaurant destroyed by hundreds of rioters who were deliberately targeting the non-Oromo businesses on his street. “We cried, we begged them to stop,” he said. “To them, we were the enemy. They had a plan, almost like a mission, and they executed what they came to do. Everything was destroyed.” Most of his employees hid for several days and then fled the city, he said. “For the first time, our ethnicity is a burden. The rioters have won”¹³

The Globe and Mail in its latest report (2020 July 21) wrote:

The mob of young men, carrying machetes, marched into the neighborhood with a list of names and ethnicities of its residents. “This land is Oromo land,” they chanted. Abebech Shiferaw, a 49-year-old widow of Amhara ethnicity, screamed for her children to flee as the mob broke into her home. She raced out, carrying her youngest child, and watched the mob set fire to her house and neighbouring houses in Shashamene, the epicentre of Ethiopia’s latest violence¹⁴.

In my previous paper¹⁵, I attempted to outline the transformation of the *Queerroo*¹⁶ from a peaceful non-violent political movement calling for achievement of a democratic country, whereby no citizen will continue being marginalized and disregarded, into the now overwhelmingly radicalized rampaging extreme ethnocentric anarchist mobs. Initially, the **movement** symbolized the Oromo struggle for increased political freedom and greater ethnic representation in the government of Ethiopia. Jawar Mohammed has played a key role in both forms of the movement; he has promoted an “Oromo first” ideology. The movement was earlier credited with having successfully conducted the mass strike that helped topple the Prime

⁹ Dieng, Adama and Welsh, Jennifer (2016) "Assessing the Risk of Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 9: Iss. 3: 4-12.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/MenelikTv/videos/1003098506811509/?app=fbl>.

¹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/zmikiyasdebir/videos/650038755593713/?app=fbl>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/abrshzgimbi/videos/1184891861887334/?app=fbl>

¹³ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

¹⁴ with the title, *Ethiopia’s latest violence exposes ethnic fault lines, threatening the country’s democratic dreams*.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

¹⁵ <https://www.zehabesha.com/from-a-struggle-for-democracy-to-an-ethno-fascist-mob-how-a-genuine-oromo-youth-queerroo-movement-is-hijacked-radicalised-and-derailed-from-its-course/>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/abrshzgimbi/videos/1184891861887334/?app=fbl>

Minister of one of Africa's most autocratic governments.¹⁷ However, since Prime Minister Abiy (himself an Oromo by ethnicity) came to power, the gravity of the content of the (false) narratives¹⁸ has changed. Indeed, the ethnic-nationalist narrative has taken a much more dominant sphere. New forms of *destabilising narratives*, and hate speech openly uttered by the political elites as well as some sections of groups of the Queeroo, have been repeatedly documented. Most of those speeches are inciting hatred and conflicts, apparently intended to destroy the peacefully woven inter-ethnic relationships prevailing in the country.¹⁹ This all boils to ethnic politics. 'Thanks to the salience of ethnic politics that has been institutionalized, it was easy to fan ethnic division and hatred. This well-funded shadowy network is trying to make the country ungovernable. Sponsoring conflicts, funding and arming militant ethnic groups, these hardliners left no stone unturned to undermine and de-legitimize Abiy Ahmed²⁰.

Countless video clips, recorded voices, pictures and written documentation appeared during this past week. The government shut off internet for over two weeks after the brutal massacre and destruction of properties. When internet service is back we could see the true picture of the atrocity crimes mostly based on personal testimonies and direct reports from the region both by known media outlets and investigative journalists²¹. Some of the horrific graphic pictures and personal accounts are footnoted here²².

Why then the Ethiopian government avoids using the term ethnic cleansing or genocide? Why do they evade talking about the massacre? Why do we hear interethnic conflict or intercommunal conflicts? In fact they vehemently deny that atrocity crimes of genocide nature happened^{23,24}. In a recent press conference given by Oromo region, the communication chief of the Oromo Kilil has blatantly denied the ethnic and religious tinged nature of the mass

¹⁷ Gardner, Tom (13 March 2018). "Freedom!': the mysterious movement that brought Ethiopia to a standstill". *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077. Archived from the original on 29 October 2019. Retrieved 2019-10-31 – via theguardian.com.

¹⁸ <https://www.zehabesha.com/history-101-fiction-and-facts-on-oromos-of-ethiopia/>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/abrshzgimbi/videos/1184891861887334/?app=fbl>

²⁰ <https://www.theafricareport.com/35950/ethiopia-who-and-what-is-behind-the-oromia-crisis-a-view-from-abiy-camp/>

²¹ <https://time.com/5871217/ethiopia-protests-haacaaluu/>

²² (1) <https://www.gudayachn.com/2020/07/2012-oromo-ethnocentric-and-fanatic.html?m=0>. (2)

<https://youtu.be/PrHc2BWY4lg>. (3) <https://youtu.be/ZIJxzwDGmP4> (4) <https://www.gudayachn.com/2020/07/2012-oromo-ethnocentric-and-fanatic.html?m=0>. (5) <https://mereja.com/amharic/v2/316806>. (6) https://youtu.be/96GfbFf_s2E (7)

<https://youtu.be/XmdEt6X33SI>. (8) <https://youtu.be/8KILNCUwGeY>. (9) https://youtu.be/avNxYL_9uZs. (10)

<https://youtu.be/X9RaYRZbdls>. (11) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ethiolove.bealu.addisu/permalink/1622302651264149/?app=fbl>. (12) https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3199798366735849&id=100001171510306&d=null&vh=i. (13) <https://www.facebook.com/100007238043524/posts/2633782430206333/?sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=i>. (14)

<https://www.facebook.com/AduMediaPostInformation/videos/2702452833408144/>. (15) ካሜራችን – August 3, 2020, በአረሲ

ደዲታ ደራሪ ከተማነኔ 23 ምን ተረጠረ? / Ethiopia news / Abbay Media news/ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rVRD9ObL8g>.

(16) <https://youtu.be/1nXiEooLZH4>

²³ In the country where the famous historian Herodotus called the land of just men, unfortunately we have heard and seen the gruesome slaughtering of Amaras and Christians of other ethnic groups in the southern, Eastern, Western and Central Ethiopia. Ethiopians and part of the world population have learned that the barbarian killers were shouting “get out Amara”, get out neftegna (a code for Amara), get out orthodox while they were killing the martyrs they identified prior to the killings. These heinous barbarians murdered even nine-month pregnant women in front of her children shouting, “kill the unborn and the would be Christian.” How further can genocide go beyond the killing of unborn child based on his possible future identity? <https://www.zehabesha.com/the-ruthless-rulers-are-completing-the-tenth-stage-of-the-amara-genocide-denial/>

²⁴ <https://youtu.be/eP4jIIKY9Hk>. Watch "አለሊ. ቢራ በአሮሚያ የተከሰተው ግድያ ትክክል ነው አለ? Ethiopia" on YouTube.

murder²⁵. He even threatened to charge journalists, reporters and historical researchers who mention the term.²⁶ Several reporters are already incarcerated/ detained. ”Furthermore, many radio and television stations, websites, newspapers, magazines and websites are also denying these genocides either through intentional cover ups, or through dereliction of duties”²⁷.

The denial is not confined in Ethiopia. Diaspora radical Oromo nationalists aggressively deny the genocide and some of them in reverse argue that it is the Oromos that are victims of the genocide by the Government excessive forces. The denial of the massacre is “baseless, ignorant and hateful.” It is beyond question that any denial or minimization of this terrible crime is intolerable and altogether unacceptable. An acquaintance, a University Professor with Oromo background, having read my article *From a Struggle for Democracy to an Ethno-Fascist Mob: How a Genuine Oromo Youth (Queer) Movement is Hijacked, Radicalised and Derailed From its Course* wrote an e mail to me in an ad hominem manner:

Dear Prof Girma,

Some body sent to me the enclosed file and I have a question for you. As a scientist, is it possible to write an article based on fabricated information. A scientist is expected to do deep investigation before writing anything. According the Ethiopian government, out of the 167 who were killed just after Hachalu’s assassination, 114 Oromos, 46 Amharas, and 7 other nationalities, <https://twitter.com/i/status/1281754967364079617>. In Ambo, on the date of funeral, 27 killed and all of them are Oromos and all were killed by military. As intellectual and scientists, I think we need to feel great responsibility. Oromo and Amhara lived together even before the creation of this country and I strongly believe that we shouldn’t spoil and damage this eternal and strong relationship. I think you recall what we have been discussing on our forum (COVID 19), that we should work hard to bring together the fragmented communities.

With best regards,

XXXXX

2020-07-25 10.20 pm

I have yet to respond to his mail. He wanted me to believe the figures that came out of the government office. I respect the gentle man’s opinion on the matter. Why then such fanatical denialism on the genocidal features of the whole tragedy? A blend of pride, misinformation and truly pathological tribalism backed by considerable expenditure by the Diaspora Radicalized (Extremist) Oromo community! The evidence is clear enough - a centrally *planned* campaign of Oromization of the region displacing or exterminating non Oromos²⁸. Just like

²⁵ More than one month after the brutal killing of more than two hundreds in the Oromo towns in the Oromo Kilil and thanks to the journalists who have just come from visiting the survivors we are now seeing the magnitude of the destruction and suffering of our people. Getachew Balcha the communication chief of the Oromo Kilil is not happy for the survivors and the victims story to be told. When you see French President Macron flew to Beirut to console the victims of the Lebanon horrible blast in a day and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia never tried in a month to be with the survivors of the Genocide in the Oromo Kilil it is clear that Ethiopia is in big trouble !!!!

²⁶ <https://youtu.be/iMHTZUMPnWY>. <https://youtu.be/EqZeAdd6puk>

²⁷ <https://www.zehabesha.com/the-ruthless-rulers-are-completing-the-tenth-stage-of-the-amara-genocide-denial/>

²⁸ The latest string of massacre against non-Oromos in the region started hours after the killing of Hachalu Hundessa on June 29, 2020. Findings from the trip to the region confirmed, however, that the killing was planned well before the killing of the singer. It was also an attack at the same time. Authorities in several cities of the region who could have stopped the attack rather played a supportive role for the attackers through inaction, at least orchestrated one. The attackers had a list of people, residential houses and businesses to be attacked. As they started the attacks in towns like Shashemene, Batu, and Ziway (among others), a pickup vehicle was supplied fuel to be used for burning the houses and businesses of non-Oromos (mostly Amharas.) The mobility of attackers from towns to towns is also something that attests to the fact that the attack was pre-planned. More than 40

Rwanda's tribal warlords, the Ethiopian "tribal activists" and intellectuals representing various tribes have stirred up the country like never before. Unlike Rwanda, these tribal elites are often western-based and educated: and they use internet and social media; not radio or walkie-talkies. The big problem is that these tribal elites don't want democracy, and they don't oppose tribalism; they actually want more of it. These tribal elites have the disastrous and archaic notion that every piece of land in Ethiopia is exclusively owned by one ethnicity. Now, the only thing stopping genocidal tribalism from repeating what they did in other regions of Ethiopia, again in Addis Ababa, is the capital city's status as the political center of Africa and host to international embassies. This is a blunt reminder that the world has no plans to end this Rwanda in slow motion. Ethiopians are alone²⁹.

The Ethiopian Communities in Diaspora are pulling together and **coalescing** to bring the matter to the International Community. New associations, movements and task forces have just been established with the aim to educate the general public and policy makers (politicians) about the warning signs of genocide in Ethiopia; To create a data base or 'genocidal archive'; and facilitate the legal process to bring perpetrators of genocide to justice. In these endeavors worthy of mention are The Society Against Genocide in Ethiopia (SAGE), European chapter of the association for genocide prevention in Ethiopia and the Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE)³⁰ directed by the renowned activist Obang Metho.³¹ [Seconds before finalising this article, it was learnt that Obang Metho, one of the top civil rights activists in Ethiopia, is reportedly receiving death threats in Oromia after he condemned the latest mass killings of minorities in the region. Some observers say the government should provide Obang extra private security, considering the dangerous situation in the country. (Teshome Borago, August 8, 2020)]³².

The motto for all these movements rotates around "Accountability matters – not only because it provides justice for victims and punishment for perpetrators. It matters because ending impunity is central to ending genocide," the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said. "Prevention and punishment – the explicitly stated twin aims of the genocide convention – can never be seen in isolation from each other. Punishment is key to prevention. Impunity is an enabler of genocide: accountability is its nemesis." (Executive Committee, SAGE August 7, 2020)³³

2. Genocide Denial: Perpetuating Victimization and the Cycle of Violence in Ethiopia, Oromia region

district towns in the region were. <https://borkena.com/2020/08/07/how-long-is-oromo-region-of-ethiopia-allowed-to-be-a-hell-non-oromo-ethiopians/> (borkena editorial August 7, 2020)

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/100002400465516/posts/3167266020030049/?sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=i>

³⁰ <http://www.solidaritymovement.org/>

³¹ ሰበር- ታላቁ አባንግ ኦሮሚያ ውስጥ የተፈጸመውን ጄ-ኖ-ሳ-ይ-ድ በተመድ ካርታ እንዲሰፍር ሊያደርግ ነው | Obang Metho. ("ኢትዮጵያ በተመድ የጄኖሳይድ ፍኖተ ካርታ እንድትሰፍር አየተሰራ ነው) ፤ <http://www.zaggolenews.com/2020/08/07/50587/>

³² <https://borkena.com/2020/08/08/ethiopia-civil-rights-activist-obang-metho-facing-threats/>

³³ <https://www.zehabesha.com/never-again-a-hollow-promise-society-against-genocide-in-ethiopia-sage/>

Wicked and dishonorable actions and rhetoric by tribalist politicians and activists, with sinister motives to foment conflict among the multitudes of Ethiopian ethnic groups, are the standard of the day in Ethiopia. It started with Tigrean cadres several decades ago; and now it is intensified by Oromo tribalists. We discern only a sinister web of self-perpetuating *political* ethnicism. What these aggressive rhetoric and misrepresentations have contributed so far is massacre, mass displacement, unrest and violence disrupting economic and social development. "Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously."— G.K. Chesterton. That is why the young and less educated Queeroo, manipulated by these monsters, were able to commit horrendous crimes against unarmed helpless civilians (see the video clips Footnoted 22). For weeks, the Ethiopian politicians and the extreme Oromo nationalists denied, downplayed and falsified facts about the genocide and destruction of properties³⁴. The denial of the Ethiopian genocide takes many forms The methods range from the brutal to the deceitful. Denial is present most strongly in political discourse, in the media, in the sphere of law, and in the *educational system*, in particular the informal education system. The authorities accuse reporters who reported on the genocide of being "enemy agents". The Oromo regional state explicitly denied that there was genocide. By their reservation to characterize the mass-killings as genocide or to condemn and restrain the Ethiopian government, the International Community appears to imply that they did not consider it so.

The officials' response to accusations of genocide has, from the beginning, been a classic example of the strategy of denial that accompanies every genocide. **Genocide denial** is the attempt to deny or minimize statements of the scale and severity of an incidence of genocide³⁵. According to Hovannisian (1998) wrote the denial as the final stage of a genocidal process and the erasing of the memories of the victim group: "Following the physical destruction of a people and their material culture, memory is all that is left and is targeted as the last victim. Complete annihilation of a people requires the banishment of recollection and suffocation of remembrance. Falsification, deception and half-truths reduce what was to what might have been or perhaps what was not at all."(ibid.)

Research³⁶ lends support to the conclusion that Genocide denial has an immense impact on both victim and perpetrator groups. The denial not only affects the relations and the possible reconciliation between victim and perpetrator, but it also affects the identity of the respective group, impacting at large the society they live in. While confrontation of the committed atrocities can be a tough process in which the victim feels humiliated anew by reliving the past, it still has a benign therapeutic effect, helping the society to come to the terms with the past. From a therapeutic point of view, letting the victim confront the past atrocity and its related painful memories is one way to reach a closure and to understand that the harm has occurred in the past. Denying recognition will have a negative effect, further victimizing the victim in this case, the Amharas, Gurages, Christians and many other ethnic and religious groups considered aliens or Neftegna, which will feel not only wronged by the perpetrator but also by being denied recognition of the occurred wrongdoing. This implies that the denial also has a

³⁴ Bhargava, Rajeev (2000). "Restoring Decency to Barbaric Societies". In Rotberg, Robert I.; Thompson, Dennis F. (eds.). *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*. Princeton University Press.

³⁵ Pech, Laurent. "The Law of Holocaust Denial in Europe: Towards a (qualified) EU-wide Criminal Prohibition". The Jean Monnet Working Papers (10/09). Archived from *the original* on 7 April 2010. Hovannisian, Richard G. (1998). "Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Comparison with Holocaust Denial". *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*. Wayne State University Press. p. 202. ISBN 081432777X.

³⁶ Volume: 5, Issue: 3, pp. 293-309. Memory Controversies in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Implications for Peacebuilding. Elisabeth King. Volume: 7, Issue: 1, pp. 4-15. Critical Genocide Studies. Alexander Laban Hinton. Volume: 3, Issue: 2, pp. 195-211. Not in My Name: A Social Psychological Study of Antecedents and Consequences of Acknowledgment of In-Group Atrocities. Sabina Čehajić and Rupert Brown

pivotal role in shaping the norms of a society since the omission of any committed errors, and thereby the lack of condemnation and punishment of the committed wrongs, risks normalizing similar actions, rising the society's tolerance for future occurrences of similar errors³⁷.

The denial has thereby a direct negative impact on the development of the new Ethiopia as a multicultural, a *cosmopolitan* society where many different people lived in almost total harmony until now. What gives the cohesion of the country is an esprit des corps based on a traditional culture, which in turn derives its solidity from the roots of a rich history as well as a common fate for all committed to live here. The constant denial shown by the Government and local Oromo officials and political elites undermining the country's laws and the issue of justice, but also the level of democracy itself. A country's democracy is supposed to be built on the rule of law and justice, upheld and safeguarded by state institutions³⁸.

However, as we seen repeatedly in Ethiopia, the omission of legal consequences and justice for diverse atrocity crimes would potentially undermine the 'infantile democracy' of the new government. Moreover, the country is on the verge of "losing a moral compass."³⁹ The society becomes susceptible to similar wrongdoings in the absence of proper handling of preceding occasions. Nonetheless, denial, especially immediately after the committed wrongdoings, is rather the rule than the exception as we witnessed in the current Ethiopian massacre and naturally almost exclusively done by the perpetrators in order to escape responsibility⁴⁰. That is why the Oromo regional office is desperately and frantically acting, embarrassing the nation and the peaceful majority Oromo people.

Israel Charny⁴¹ outlines the tactics of denial in "Templates for Gross Denial of a Known Genocide: A Manual," in *The Encyclopedia of Genocide*, volume 1, page 168⁴². Most of them are being used by the Oromo Regional officials including the Police Commissioner of the Oromia Region.

2.1. Question and minimize the statistics

The authorities in Ethiopia are doing exactly the same as we have seen in the private mail I received from another genocide denier.

2.2. Attack the motivations of the truth-tellers

The extreme Oromo politicians and the authorities in the Oromia region are accusing reporters, journalists and researchers for aggravating the matters and label them as "foreign agents"

³⁷ McGreal, Chris. Genocide? What genocide?, *The Guardian* 20 March 2000. Hovannisian, Richard G. (1998). "Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Comparison with Holocaust Denial". *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*. Wayne State University Press. p. 202.

³⁸ Bevernage, Berber (2012). *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice*. Routledge.

³⁹ Auron, Yair (2007). *The Banality of Denial*. Routledge. "This new book describes Israeli attitudes toward the phenomenon of genocide in general, including Biafra, Tibet, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Taken together with [Auron's] earlier book, *The Banality of Indifference*, both works offer an opportunity to explore a subject of great contemporary relevance."

⁴⁰ Colvin, Christopher J. (2003). "The Healing of Nations: The Promise and Limits of Political Forgiveness". In Hodgkin, Katherine; Radstone, Susannah (eds.). *Contested pasts: The politics of memory*. Routledge.

⁴¹ Israel Charny, "Classification of denials of the Holocaust and other genocides" in *The genocide studies reader*, eds. Samuel Totten and Paul R. Bartrop (New York: Routledge, 2009), 517-518.

⁴² <https://www.genocidewatch.com/twelve-ways-to-deny-genocide>.

2.3. Claim that the deaths were inadvertent

We have yet to hear that kind of statements. However, one can observe the temptations by the authorities to interpret the atrocious crimes as spontaneously occurred because of the murder of Hachalu Hundessa, an Ethiopian singer, songwriter, and civil rights activist⁴³. Hundessa was shot on the evening of 29 June 2020 at the Gelan Condominiums area in Addis Ababa. Hundessa's death sparked protests throughout the Oromia Region, leading to the deaths of 500 people.⁴⁴

In 1998, more than 100 prominent scholars signed a petition that opposed denial of the Armenian Genocide. It said, in part:

Denial of genocide strives to reshape history in order to demonize victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators. Denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide. It is what Elie Wiesel has called a “double killing.” Denial murders the dignity of survivors and seeks to destroy remembrance of the crime. In a century plagued by genocide, we affirm the moral necessity of remembering.

2.4. Emphasize the strangeness of the victims

Whether they be classified as Neftegna, Amhara, Christian or of another race and caste, they are *unlike* us. They are colonizers and invaders!

2.5. Rationalize the deaths as the result of tribal conflict

Similar attempts have been made by the political elites and government media especially The Oromo medias as if the deaths were just the result of age-old tribal conflicts between the groups or interethnic strife or intercommunal conflicts.

2.6. Blame “out of control” forces for committing the killings

Distancing responsibility from the government and local authorities. And that portraying the genocide as a work of young disgruntled groups. In fact some reports and personal accounts show that some security forces and so called special forces/the militia facilitated the catastrophic and extremely destructive violence by one group (s) against unarmed civilians because they belong to the wrong ethnic/religious groups.

In many areas of Oromia region, the federal and regional government were not willing to deploy security forces in time to protect minorities. In one case in Dera town, a father was murdered in front of his son, who himself sustained serious injury in the attack. Moments before his father’s death, his son called law enforcement personnel for support, but they responded by saying they were not authorised to intervene. Instead, reports indicate that when victims tried to defend themselves, Oromia region Special Forces attacked them. Media outlets were actively propagating the attacks live and giving guidance to the attackers. Oromo Media Network (OMN) operating from Minnesota, USA, broadcasted a series of

⁴³ https://www.zehabesha.com/how-the-murder-of-musician-hachalu-hundessa-incited-violence-in-ethiopia/?no_cache=1

⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hachalu_Hundessa

inflammatory hate-filled messages, including calls to lock and burn the homes of Amhara people.⁴⁵

2.7. Avoid antagonizing the genocidists, who might walk out of “the peace process.”

There was no war or direct conflict in the area where the latest atrocity were committed and there was therefore no peace process. This tactic of denial is non applicable at this stage.

2.8. Justify denial in favor of current economic interests

The Ethiopian government is a strategic ally of the USA on Global war on terrorism⁴⁶ and China has huge economic interest and investment in Ethiopia.

2.9. Claim that the victims are receiving good treatment

No complete information on this point/tactic at this stage! The displaced are being supported by the public, nongovernmental organizations and some governmental institutions.

2.10 Claim that what is going on does not fit the definition of genocide

Nations and even Amnesty International still avoid calling the crimes in The Oromia region by their proper name. It is a pity. There are a number of reasons for such reluctance that I cannot delve in here.

2.11 Blame the victims

There is unabated assault on everything Amara or Neftegna in the current Ethiopia in the Oromia region. It actually started in 1991 when TPLF/EPRDF took power. Some groups have unabashedly identified the Amharas and Orthodox Christians as their mortal enemies and continued to decimate unsuspecting, unarmed Amaras with impunity. Other ethnic groups have also been targets of attack. All indications is that the security apparatus and police forces are implicit or tacit collaborators. ‘Amaras and other non oromo ethnic groups including Christian Oromos are denied from having jobs and opening business. The genocides are labeling them as aliens and settlers. “Denial: The perpetrators of Amara genocide dig up the mass graves, drag and burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the Amaras. They give the dead bodies of Amaras other ethnic names to reduce the number of Amaras massacred during the genocide. The government blocks independent investigations of the genocide”⁴⁷(see Appendix 1). ‘When Oromo leaders from oversea (or even from Addis Ababa) calls for a massacre against neftegna (in their mind all the problems in the world is linked to neftegna), youth groups who subscribe to Oromo nationalists ideology, the greatest proportion of which irrational hate, goes on the killing rampage against neftegna’⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ <https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/22/ethnic-cleansing-oromia/?fbclid=IwAR260firPWyPmmysTIuMslO79EXggXmzXftyjCEYLWql-yxrQOgyzqy8gBc>

⁴⁶ [http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/AFRICOM'S DILEMMA: HE "GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM," CAPACITY BUILDING," HUMANITARIANISM, ND THE FUTURE OF U.S. SECURITY POLICY IN AFRICA.](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/AFRICOM'S%20DILEMMA%3A%20HE%20%22GLOBAL%20WAR%20ON%20TERRORISM%22%2C%20CAPACITY%20BUILDING%2C%20HUMANITARIANISM%2C%20AND%20THE%20FUTURE%20OF%20U.S.%20SECURITY%20POLICY%20IN%20AFRICA)

⁴⁷ <https://www.zehabesha.com/brutal-intellectuals-are-denying-the-amara-holocaust> (Belayneh Abate, 2020).

⁴⁸ <https://borkena.com/2020/08/07/how-long-is-oromo-region-of-ethiopia-allowed-to-be-a-hell-non-oromo-ethiopians/>

2.12 Say that peace and reconciliation are more important than blaming people for genocide

This is the justification for amnesties for mass murderers as part of peace agreements, and for opposition to post-conflict tribunals. The tricky thing is that there is no conflict in the Ethiopian genocide in the strict sense of the word; there is no interethnic strife. No intercommunal war! It is just one way! The so called Elders Council (The Aba Gedas) were involved in the past in the so called peace process. It is just a mockery of justice. But peace and reconciliation are not alternatives to justice. Lasting peace requires justice. Without prosecution of those who commit genocide, an expectation of impunity is created⁴⁹. As Fein⁵⁰ and Harff⁵¹ have shown, one of the best predictors of future genocide is previous genocide that has gone unpunished⁵². Without trials, denial becomes permanent⁵³. Ethiopia has numerous *covered* previous genocidal crimes which have gone unpunished. It is time to say Enough is enough!

To sum, first and foremost, as a moral imperative, the Ethiopian Government and international community must once and for all denounce the genocide denial, in Pope Benedict's words, as "intolerable and altogether unacceptable." "If the international community has learned any lessons from its past sins, it must take stock of the gravity of recent acts perpetrated against Christians and Amharas in Ethiopia, and must do everything possible to hold those responsible to account and to prevent further escalation"⁵⁴. Stanely Cohen (2013)⁵⁵ stated that three forms of denial are possible with respect to what is being denied: *literal*, *interpretative* and *implicatory*. All these forms of denial are manifested in different forms and utterances by the government officials in Ethiopia. Literal denial implies that the knowledge or the raw facts are blatantly denied: "nothing happened," "there was no massacre or genocide." We have seen that by Oromo ethno nationalists, in particular, those residing abroad and inciting, fomenting and stirring up massacres and property destructions. With interpretative denial, the raw facts are not denied but are attributed a different meaning: "it was inter communal conflict or unplanned spontaneous violence on the aftermath of the murder of the popular singer" or "collateral damage" (and not a massacre). Implicatory denial refers to the denial or the minimization of its significance or of its implications. The last one can be *read* even in the speech of the Prime minister. Mr Abiy Ahmed Ali please learn to "call a spade a spade", without "beating about the bush" truthfully, frankly, and directly, even to the point of being blunt and even if the subject is unpleasant for your politics⁵⁶. That, calling the tragedy as it is by its proper name save the nation. Working to prosecute the perpetrators of genocide, remember its victims, and move forward is an enormous undertaking but it is the right one, Mr. Prime Minister, in order to

⁴⁹ Parent, Genevieve (2016) "Genocide Denial: Perpetuating Victimization and the Cycle of Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 10: Iss. 2: 38-58. P. 54

⁵⁰ Genocide Watch, 1992. *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*, 1993. *Accounting for Genocide*, 1979. *Human Rights and Wrongs*, 2007. (By Helen Fein)

⁵¹ Fletcher, Laurel E. and Harvey M. Weinstein. "Violence and Social Repair: Rethinking the contribution of justice to reconciliation." *Human Right Quaterly* 24, no.3 (2002): 573-639. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2002.0033>

⁵² Barbara Harff, "A German-Born Genocide Scholar," in Samuel Totten and Steven L. Jacobs, eds., *Pioneers of Genocide Studies*, 2002, pp. 97-112

⁵³ <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/Statics/Leading%20specialists.pdf>

⁵⁴ Executive Committee, SAGE. August 7, 2020. (Personal Communication, 2020).

⁵⁵ Cohen, Stanley. *States of Denial*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

⁵⁶ See also <https://borkena.com/2020/08/08/call-the-crime-in-ormia-region-by-its-name-ongoing-genocide/>

bring about reconciliation, justice, accountability, and peace in that ancient country, the proud of blacks and browns!.

A meaningful and sustainable peace process implies an impartial and unbiased view of the past, the present and the future. The past has to be dealt with before one can benefit from the present to its fullest extent and (re)build in preparation of a more peaceful future. When one's suffering intensifies under the influence of "old" and "new" stressors, one is left with precious little resources to deal with his or her own daily battles and even less to (re)construct or transform one's environment and society. Denial prevents the survivors from moving on as he or she is repeatedly thrown back into the past where they relive and attempt to sort out what happened, why, how, and the then what⁵⁷.

Appendix 1. The 10 Stages of Genocide⁵⁸

#	Stage	Characteristics	Preventive measures
1	Classification	People are divided into "them and us".	"The main preventive measure at this early stage is to develop universalistic institutions that transcend... divisions."
2	Symbolization	"When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups..."	"To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden as can hate speech ".
3	Discrimination	"Law or cultural power excludes groups from full civil rights: segregation or apartheid laws, denial of voting rights".	"Pass and enforce laws prohibiting discrimination. Full citizenship and voting rights for all groups."
4	Dehumanization	"One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects, or diseases."	"Local and international leaders should condemn the use of hate speech and make it culturally unacceptable. Leaders who incite genocide should be banned from international travel and have their foreign finances frozen."
5	Organization	"Genocide is always organized... Special army units or militias are often trained and armed..."	"The U.N. should impose arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres , and create commissions to investigate violations"
6	Polarization	"Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda..."	"Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups...Coups d'état by extremists should be opposed by international sanctions."
7	Preparation	"Mass killing is planned. Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity..."	"At this stage, a Genocide Emergency must be declared. Full diplomatic pressure by regional organizations must be invoked, including preparation to intervene to prevent genocide."
8	Persecution	"Expropriation, forced displacement, ghettos, concentration camps".	"Direct assistance to victim groups, targeted sanctions against persecutors, mobilization of humanitarian assistance or intervention, protection of refugees."
9	Extermination	"It is 'extermination' to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human".	"At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape corridors should be established with heavily armed international protection."

⁵⁷ Parent, Genevieve (2016) "Genocide Denial: Perpetuating Victimization and the Cycle of Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 10: Iss. 2:38-58.

⁵⁸ Stanton, Gregory. ["The Ten Stages of Genocide"](#). *Genocide Watch*.

10 [Denial](#) "The perpetrators... deny that they committed any crimes..." "The response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts"

Stanton's Ten Stage Model of the Genocidal Process is widely used in comparative genocide studies, by teachers in schools and universities, and in museums such as the Dallas



"If you are emotionally attached to your tribe, religion or political leaning to the point that truth and justice become secondary considerations, your education is useless.

Your exposure is useless. If you cannot reason beyond petty sentiments, you are a liability to mankind."

~ Dr. Chuba Okadigbo (Late)